

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00
USIE-00 CCO-00 PRS-01 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 /045 W
-----281830Z 032774 /41

Z O 281710Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 1264
INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE
ANEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 674
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 4282

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PK, US, FPRO
SUBJECT: PROPOSED RESPONSE TO BHUTTO'S ALLEGATIONS

REF: ISLAMABAD 4278

1. BY SEPTTEL WE ARE SENDING DEPARTMENT MAIN POINTS RAISED BY PRIME MINISTER IN HIS SPEECH TO PARLIAMENT APRIL 28 IN WHICH HE SEVERELY CRITICIZED THE UNITED STATES AND ACCUSED US OF GROSS INTERFERENCE IN PAKISTAN'S DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, OF SUPPORTING THE OPPOSITION, AND BY IMPLICATION OF ATTEMPTING TO ENGINEER HIS OVERTHROW. SPEECH OBVIOUSLY SIGNALS BHUTTO'S INTENTION TO OPEN A NEW AND DIFFICULT PERIOD IN US/PAKISTANI RELATIONS, AND WE WILL BE SENDING MESSAGE TO DEPARTMENT GIVING OUR VIEWS ON WHAT THIS MEANT HOW WE PROCEED IN THE MEDIUM AND LONG TERM.

2. OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN, THERE ARE SEVERAL STEPS WE MUST TAKE IN RESPONSE TO BHUTTO'S SPEECH. IN SEPTTELS WE ARE ADDRESSING SECURITY QUESTION AND OTHER ACTIONS WE HAVE TAKEN ALREADY. WE THINK IT ESSENTIAL THAT WE IMMEDIATELY RESPOND
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TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S ACCUSATIONS IN TWO WAYS, BOTH VIA THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN AND IN DEMARCHES BOTH IN WASHINGTON AND HERE.

3. IN HIS SPEECH, BHUTTO EXHIBITED THE TRAITS OF THE POLITICAL GUT FIGHTER HE IS AND WE BELIEVE HE MAY WELL - AS A MEANS OF BOLSTERING HIS OWN POSITION AT HOME - WANT TO GET INTO A

SLINGING MATCH WITH US ON THIS ISSUE. WE FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE TO OUR DISADVANTAGE TO ENGAGE IN SUCH A CONTEST WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. RATHER, IN OUR RESPONSE, WE SHOULD BE FIRM AND RESOLUTE BUT NEVERTHELESS CONTROLLED.

4. WE SUGGEST FOLLOWING TEXT FOR DEPARTMENT STATEMENT.
QUOTE PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO HAS MADE DEEPLY DISTURBING AND GROUNDLESS ALLEGATIONS OF AMERICAN INTERFERENCE IN THE PAKISTAN POLITICAL PROCESS. WE FIND SUCH TENDENTIOUS CHARGES ESPECIALLY DISQUIETING CONSIDERING THE LONG HISTORY OF CLOSE, FRIENDLY AND AMICABLE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO STATES. AS WE STATED YESTERDAY, THE USG HAS NEITHER THE DESIRE NOR THE REASON TO MAKE ANY EFFORT TO SUPPORT THE PRIME MINISTER'S OPPOSITION OR TO INTERFERE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN PAKISTAN. WE ARE STRONGLY EXPRESSING OUR CONCERN IN THIS MATTER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN AND OUR HOPE THAT CALM COUNSEL WILL PREVAIL. WE ARE ALSO EMPHASIZING OUR HOPE THAT SUCH UNSUBSTANTIATED ALLEGATIONS WILL NOT LEAD TO RANCOR AND ANIMOSITY BETWEEN OUR TWO NATIONS THAT WOULD BE DESTRUCTIVE OF OUR MUTUAL INTERESTS. END QUOTE.

5. WE WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING BY NIACT IMMEDIATE COPY OF WHATEVER STATEMENT DEPARTMENT DECIDES TO RELEASE AND ALSO QA AND AS TO BE USED.

6. FOR DEPARTMENT'S INFORMATION, IN HIS SPEECH THE PM REFERRED TO CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO AMERICAN OFFICIALS (PARA 8 REFTEL). THIS WAS BASED ON TELEPHONE REPORT PASSED FROM CONGEN KARACHI TO EMBASSY ON APRIL 12 THAT LOCAL KARACHI CONFIDENTIAL

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JOURNALIST HAD HEARD RUMOR THE PM WAS QUITTING AND LEAVING THE COUNTRY. PHONE LINE WAS OBVIOUSLY TAPPED AND PM CHOSE TO USE THIS REFERENCE TO JOURNALIST'S RUMOR IN DISTORTED FORM TO SUPPORT HIS CONTENTION THE US HAD ACTED AGAINST HIS INTERESTS.

7. WE ALSO STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT SECRETARY CALL IN AMBASSADOR YAQUB AND MAKE STRONG DEMARCHE STATING OUR DEEP DISTRESS AND PROFOUND SHOCK AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT ALONG SAME LINES AS USED BY SPOKESMAN IN HIS PUBLIC COMMENT. WE BELIEVE IT NECESSARY THAT THIS BE DONE AT THE SECRETARY'S LEVEL TO UNDERSCORE THE CONCERN WE FEEL ABOUT THE PM'S UNWARRANTED ALLEGATIONS WHICH WERE MADE IN A FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY PRESENTATION CARRIED LIVE ON NATIONWIDE TV AND RADIO. SECRETARY SHOULD BE EVEN FIRMER, HOWEVER, HIGHLIGHTING THE DAMAGE TO OUR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP THAT RESULTS FROM SUCH INTEMPERATE AND BASELESS CHARGES. ALTHOUGH WE DESIRE FRIENDLY AND WARM RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AND FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT BOTH NATIONS HAVE BENEFITED CONSIDERABLY FROM OUR TIES IN THE PAST, WE DO NOT SEE HOW A RELATIONSHIP ON SUCH A BASIS CAN

CONTINUE IN THE FACE OF SUCH UNFOUNDED ALLEGATIONS. WE WILL ALWAYS BE WILLING TO DISCUSS THESE CONCERNS QUIETLY AND REASONABLY WITH THE GOP BUT WE WILL NOT ENGAGE IN A PUBLIC EXCHANGE OF CHARGES WHICH CAN ONLY CONTRIBUTE FURTHER TO THE HARM ALREADY DONE TO OUR RELATIONSHIP.

8. WE WOULD HOPE THAT SECRETARY CAN MAKE DEMARCHE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. CHARGE STRONGLY RECOMMENDS HE MAKE SIMILAR DEMARCHE TO FOREIGN MINISTER AT EARLIEST APPROPRIATE MOMENT, PREFERABLY MORNING APRIL 29 PAKISTAN TIME. WE WILL AWAIT THE DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEMARCHE, FOREIGN RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, ANTIAMERICAN FEELING, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 28-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ISLAMA04282
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770148-1265
Format: TEL
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770410/aaaaaifl.tel
Line Count: 129
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 00e6b39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 ISLAMABAD 4278
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2661180
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROPOSED RESPONSE TO BHUTTO'S ALLEGATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, PK, US, (BHUTTO, ALI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/00e6b39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009